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GUESSES AT DRUIDHEACHT

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GUESSES AT DRUIDHEACHT:

BEING A

LECTURE READ BEFORE THE UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION OF WESTERN INDIA, POONA,

ON FRIDAY, 28th JUNE, 1861,

BY

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THE REV. G. L. FENTON, B.A.,

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Guesses at Druidheacht.

"Diluvian truths and patriarchal lore."—WORDSWORTH.

[WITHIN a few miles from the home of the writer's boyhood, there stands a "Druidical Circle"—one tall upright stone surrounded by a circle of smaller ones,—which is known to the peasantry of the North as "Long Meg and her daughters." The *Meg* in this instance, he opines, bearing an original signification little suspected by those who traditionally use the word; being a veritable Celtic term of the same root and meaning as the Greek μέγας, "great."* Compared with some other like remains, this might be called rather a *mikro*- than a *mega*-lithic structure, but it was "long" or large enough to excite a wondering awe, and to awaken a curiosity in Druidic lore which is not satisfied to this day. To these early associations the reader is probably indebted for the following sheet of "Guesses."

In preparing the paper he has been mainly indebted to the *Essays* of Archdeacon Williams of Cardigan†—he has not had the advantage of comparing the work on the "*Celtic Druids*, an attempt to show that they were the Priests of Oriental Colonies, who emigrated from India," by Godfrey Higgins.‡ It is somewhat tantalising, also, to observe two little works bearing upon the subject advertised within the last few weeks, without being able to obtain them for reference: viz. "*The Druids*, a Lecture by the Rev. J. B. Pratt," and the "*Veil of Isis, or the Mysteries of the Druids*, by W. W. Reade."—G. L. F.]

"THE Druids have left no [written] record of themselves. They seem to have disdained an immortality separate from the existence of their Order; but the shadow of their glory is reflected for ever in the verse of Lucan, and in the prose of Cæsar. The Poet imagined, that if the knowledge of the Gods was known to man, it had been revealed to the priests of Britain alone. The narrative of the Historian is comprehensive; but, with all the philosophical cast of his mind, and the intensity of his curiosity, Cæsar was not a Druid; and only a Druid could have written—had he dared!—on DRUIDHEACHT—a sacred, unspeakable word, at which the people trembled in their veneration."—J. D'ISRAELI'S *Amenities of Literature*.

* Query: Whether this does not apply to the gaunt and Amazonian "*Meg* Merrilies"?—and whether Dominie Sampson was not in error when he amplified the name into "Mrs. Margaret"?

† *Essays on Various Subjects, Philological, Philosophical, Ethnological, and Archæological, &c.* By John Williams, A.M., Oxon., Archdeacon of Cardigan. London, 1858.

‡ This is that unquestionably erudite and "*philosophical fanatic*," from whose "*Apocalypsis*" the late Brigadier John Jacob imbibed his crude and infidel fancies. Would that he had listened to his brother's advice—"Pray stick to your Rifles!"

THE DRUIDS were the teachers in philosophy and religion of a race of men who occupied the British Islands in times far anterior to history, and who had brought with them from the East whatever knowledge the East had then to impart. The language of this ancient people was the *Cymric;* and they have left imperishable memorials in Great Britain, in Ireland, and Armorica, as well as in other distant lands, imposing by their vastness and rude magnificence.

These *Cymbri, Cumri,* or *Cimmerians,* are believed to be the offspring of *Gomer* the son of Japheth.* We are, therefore, prepared to find some relics of primæval faith and customs among them. From their birthplace in the land of Shinar, the nomadic tribes brought with them all the antediluvian lore which Noah was able to convey to his immediate descendants; and the insular situation of Britain, in which Druidism at a very early period found an asylum, tended to maintain a degree of primitive simplicity in doctrine, which the Magi of Persia and the Gymnosophists of India (with whom and the Chaldæans they are classed, by ancient writers, as the originators of philosophy), had lost. Even in Britain, the patriarchal stream was sullied before the arrival of Cæsar on its coasts, and this very probably by the admixture of Phœnician superstitions;—at least, the Bards record an obscure tradition of a Phœnician ship having imported a religion in exchange for Cornish tin.

The Oriental origin of the old British and Armorican priests may, we think, be established by philological and ethnological proofs. Their name has been derived by classical authors from the Greek word δρυς, "an oak," under which symbol they are said to have worshipped GOD:—

"Αγαλμα δε Διος κελτικον υψηλη Δρυς."

MAXIMUS TYRIUS, *Dissert.* 38.

An action recorded of Joshua (xxiv. 26) may serve to illustrate the reverence which early nations had for the oak. But if we were compelled to search for the origin of the name of Druid in *dendro*-logy, we might with more probability trace it up higher in the stem of the great Indo-European family to the Celtic *derw,* and the Sanscrit *dru,* "a tree."† We might then consider whether this appellative had its rise in the veneration for particular trees, or in the fact that one *Gwyddon Ganhebon* (celebrated by the Bards as one of the three masters of poetry and memorial, and identified by certain Welsh archæologists with Hermes Trismegistos‡

* The radical letters in *Gomer* and *Cymri* are the same.

† Etymologists have referred to the Eastern *Dervesh,* as well as to the Greek *Dryades.* (Qy. Druidesses?) But the former means "a beggar," and, though its derivation is uncertain, it has nothing to do with *tree.* The synonym of our own word "tree" is in Sanscrit *taru.*

‡ Vide Davies' *"Celtic Researches,"* and *"Mythology of the Druids."*—The epithet *Tris-megistos,* "thrice-greatest," was, it is probable, simply distinctive,—there being a later and inferior Hermes. Some have, however, imagined an allusion to Trinitarian doctrine!

and the patriarch Enoch) is said to have invented the symbolical language of trees, or (to use the words of Taliesin) to have "set in order the elementary trees and plants." We will not mystify our hearers with a discussion of this recondite question. It is more interesting to observe that Becanus, whom Vossius follows, takes *Druidh* or *Druis* to be an old Celtic word, formed from *trowis*, or *truis*—a "teacher of the truth." We are well disposed to regard this as the veritable etymon. Dr. Lindsay Alexander says the word *Druidh* is still used in the sense of a *sage*, or *magus*.

The head seat of Druidic worship in Britain was in Wiltshire. In Gaul, the central sacred grove occupied the site of the modern Chartres.

Living on the purest diet, abstaining from animal food and intoxicating liquors, the Druids were believed to spend their time in perpetual acts of devotion or in abstruse meditation. They usually dwelt in solitary caves, or megalithic chambers, answering to the description of the *adytum* in the temple at Delphi, as we find it in Pausanias. Whenever they were seen in public, they appeared clothed in long white robes, with flowing beard, and a mild majestic aspect. The snow-white tunics and tiaras edged with gold; the golden rings and eggs, symbolical of eternity and fecundity, which they wore as ornaments; their sacred silver wands; their haunts and habits,—all combined, with their mystic but elevating theology, to win for them an astonishing influence over the vulgar. Their persons were held sacred and inviolate; they were exempted from taxes and military services: it is not beyond belief that they were regarded as beings of an order superior to common humanity.

The Druids were entrusted with the education of youth, and had the entire management of all religious ceremonies, festivals, and sacrifices.* They were empowered to appoint or depose kings and magistrates; and, in fine, they exercised the highest priestly, legislative, and judiciary functions without control. "The Celts"—we quote now from Dion Chrysostom, but the statement is confirmed by Tacitus and Cæsar,—"The Celts have set certain presiding counsellors over their kings whom they call *Druids*, men skilled in soothsaying and other sciences, without whom the kings may neither execute nor determine anything; so that, in fact, they bear sway, and the kings, with all their thrones of gold, and palaces and feasts, are but the ministers of the Druids."

The Druidical corporation was divided, according to Strabo, into three orders: *Bards*, *Vates*, and *Druids*. These orders are thus characterised in reference to their costume: the *Bards* wore long blue robes; the *Vates* were clad in bright green; the *Druids*—"the splendid race, wearers of gold chains, the eminently white." Tacitus (*Annales* xiv.), and the author of an account of the Cassiterides, or "Tin Islands," quoted by

* "Εθνον δε 'ουκ 'ανευ Δρυιδων, says Strabo; and Cæsar—"Illi rebus divinis intersunt, sacrificia publica ac privata procurant, religiones interpretantur. Ad hos magnus adolescentium numerus disciplinæ causâ concurrit, magnoque ii sunt apud eos honore."

Strabo, speak of certain *female* votaries of the Druids, "wearing *dark and dismal* garments—gowns reaching to the feet, and going about with wands or torches in their hands, something like the furies in tragedies."* These are by some writers called "Druidesses," but their position is uncertainly related. In later times, these female Druids appear to have been consulted as capable of foretelling future events. Again, the Arch-Druid, or *Coifi-Dry*, was distinguished by an oaken garland, surmounted by a tiara of gold; a golden knife to cut the sacred misletoe; around his neck a golden chain, from which was suspended a golden plate, inscribed with the words "The Gods require Sacrifice"; a curiously-wrought breastplate of the same precious material, and a pair of singularly-carved pentagonal sandals.†

The *Bards*, selected from the most stately and beautiful of the noble youths—there was no Druidic *caste*,—were the singers and poets. Hence the image with which Collins commences his beautiful *Ode on the Death of Thomson*:—

"In yonder grove *a Druid* lies
Where slowly winds the stealing wave;
The year's best sweets shall duteous rise
To deck its poet's sylvan grave."

And again,—

"Long, long thy stone and pointed clay
Shall melt the musing Briton's eyes:
O vales and wild woods! shall he say,
In yonder grove your *Druid* lies!"

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* Thus they appeared to C. T. Suetonius and his legionaries, when they invaded the island of Mona.

† The following lines describe the advance of the *Coibhi Druidh* through the sacred grove in solemn procession at the head of his subordinate train:—

"Hark! heard I not the bardic shell
Chanting high the thrilling spell?
Lo! 'tis the Druid pomp, whose tread
Hath waken'd Mona's hallow'd shade,
Where sometimes thro' the deep'ning gloom
Hesus' dark form the boughs assume,
And sometimes thro' the wind-swung trees
Scowls the dread eye of Taranis!

"Onward they came in speechless dread,
When now, advancing thro' the glade,
An aged form appear'd,
Whose silver wand, and sacred vest,
And haughty air and hoary beard,
The Druid Arch confessed.
But time and grief had changed a'hien
With terror once in battle seen;
Yet still his step was proud and bold,
And on his neck a chain of gold,
With gilded eggs was strung;
His wrist a golden bracelet bound,
His white robe sweeping to the ground
With bells of gold was hung."—*Mss.*

The *Vates* or *Ovates* (the Cymric form is *Faidh* or *Ovydd*), were the teachers of science and natural philosophy.* The *Druids* (proper) were the theologians and priests, discharging also the judicial and legislative offices. Of these we will now speak a little in order.

I. THE BARDS.—The *motto* of the Bardic order was—"*The Truth against the World.*" According to the Institutional Triads of Britain, to make Truth manifest, and to diffuse the knowledge of it, is numbered among the special attributes of the Bards. The Poetical Triads, in a similar spirit, reckon "Pure Truth" among the three purities of Poetry.† Many Ethical Triads have been preserved by classical authors, and in the writings of the ancient Bards. We cull a specimen or two:

"A noble descent is the most desolate of widows, unless it be wedded to some eminent virtue."

"Serenity will succeed when the rain is over."

"Wo to the land where there is no religion!"

The authenticity of these ancient British poems has been learnedly vindicated by Sharon Turner.‡

Chaucer thus refers to the older Bards:—

"Those old gentil Bretons in their days
Of divers adventurès maden lays,
Rymèd in their first Breton tongue,
Which layès with their instruments they sung."

The Celtic harp has not yet lost its sweetness and power. Indeed, it has been said§ that in our highest poetry, from Spenser to Tennyson, when the melody is listened for through the harmony, may be still discerned the ancient British strain.

II. THE VATES.—The Vates "prelect at large," wrote Cæsar, "on the stars and their motion, on the size of the universe and the earth, and on natural philosophy." This is confirmed by Pomponius Mela. On these subjects, indeed, they pushed their inquiries, under all disadvantages, to a height which puts us moderns to shame. The name *Saronides*,‖ by which they were known to the ancients, is derived from two British words, signifying "pointers out of stars."

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* The name *Eubages*, given by Ammianus Marcellinus, is thought to be a mistake, perhaps a corruption of the Celtic *Eu-phaiste*, "good youths," applied to the *pupils*. The writer of an article on "The Welsh and their Literature" in the *Quarterly Review*, No. 217, thus distributes the three orders:—"The Bard wrought the philosophy of the Ovydd into song, and the Druid communicated to his pupils the result of the labours of the Bard and Ovydd."

† This peculiar regard for Truth may be alleged in confirmation of the origin of the appellative *Druid* to which we gave the preference in our introduction.

‡ A complete edition and translation are desiderated at the hands of the learned Archdeacon of Cardigan.

§ *Macmillan's Magazine.*

‖ *Sêr*, stars, and *Honydd*, one who discriminates or points out.—*Davies' Mythology.*

They were acquainted with *alphabetical characters*, although, from mistaken motives of policy, they neither committed their instructions to writing, nor used any inscriptions on their coins. It is mainly owing to this reserve that Celtic Druidism has died out without leaving any records of itself, such as we still possess in reference to the Scandinavian mythology of the sons of Odin. Ordinary intercourse with persons at a distance was carried on by means of that symbolical language in the twigs and leaves of trees to which we have already alluded.

> "The points of the symbolized trees,
> What is it they whisper so forcibly?"

is the question of Taliesin the Bard,* who adds—

> "They are read by the sages
> Who are versed in science."

Here is a specimen of this tree-language :—

> "The top of the oak, the bitter sprig of the ash,
> And the sweet brake-weed declare—*a broken laugh.*
> The cheek can not conceal the anguish of the heart."

The mysterious language of trees is called *rhŷn* by the bards, *i. e.* "secret." These were the famed "runic spells."

Spending their time in groves and mountains, where the vegetable productions of the earth spontaneously courted their attention, the *Ovydd* naturally acquired considerable knowledge of botany. That they paid special honour to certain trees, is well known, and the fact is by many supposed to be commemorated in the general name of the Druidic body. They were also skilled in metallurgy. Their proficiency in the art of medicine is celebrated by Pliny. The misletoe of the oak was so highly valued by them, as possessing a divine healing virtue, that the Roman naturalist inferred it to be an object of religious veneration. The misletoe, or "All-heal," was sought for on the sixth day of the moon ; when found, it was rapturously hailed, and the Arch-Druid, ascending the tree, cropped it with a consecrated golden knife, and received it into his *sagum* or robe, amid the applauses of the multitude. Two milk-white bulls were then sacrificed, and the Deity invoked to render efficacious the misletoe in those distempers in which it should be administered.

They were conversant with the abstrusest calculations of astronomical cycles and eclipses ; and it is certain that they paid a degree of adoration to the Sun, as symbolical of a Being mightier than he—even of HIM with whom day and night, morning and evening, are the same, for they are (and

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* Taliesin, styled *Pen Bierdd*, "Chief of the Bards," and, along with the two Merlins, one of the three great Christian Bards, flourished in the sixth century. Our great poet Wordsworth speaks of—

> "Taliesin's unforgotten lays."

In Jeremiah i., 11, 12, we have an instance of the *language of trees*,—

> "Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
> For infant minds."—COLERIDGE.

the ancient Druid knew them to be) but the emanations of His power and the beautiful effects of His government.

The extraordinary skill of these olden philosophers in *mechanics* is to be seen at this day in the stupendous monuments of art and power which remain at Stonehenge* and Avebury in Wiltshire, and in many other places in Britain and France. The feats wrought in the raising, transporting, and erecting such enormous masses of stone as constitute these (so-called) Cyclopean monuments, are almost superhuman, and evince the uncommon progress of our Druidical fathers in the knowledge and application of those mechanical powers which produced such wonderful results.

On this head we must enter a little more into detail.

The Druidic "stones of testimony," as Archdeacon Williams calls them, are divided by him into six classes,—

1. The *Mênchwiv* or *Maensigl*, the "Rocking" or "Loggan Stones," of which examples are frequent. These were used for the purpose of an ordeal; and Mason, in his drama of "Caractacus," thus describes the legend :—

> "Behold yon huge
> And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
> Which, poised by magic, rests its central weight
> On yonder pointed rock: firm as it seems,
> Such is its strange and wondrous property,
> It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
> Of him whose heart is pure; but to a traitor,
> Tho' even a giant's prowess nerved his arm,
> It stands as fixed as Snowdon."

Cromwell's soldiers, it is said, having, in their ignorant *petroclastic* zeal, broken one of these rocking-stones in Derbyshire, discovered that it was made moveable by a pivot morticed into one stone, corresponding with a socket in the other.

Loggan is perhaps a corruption of *roggan*, or *rhoc*, "a stone." Hence the phrase, "*rocking* a cradle," or, as they still say in Devonshire, "*logging*" it.

2. The Megalithic Chamber, or Adytum, of which the monument called "Kit's Coty House," situated on the summit of a lofty knoll between Maidstone and Rochester in Kent, is a fine and complete specimen.† This was

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* The British name of this great national temple was *Cor-Kfvcoth* (pronounce *Cuffoeth*), the "Holy Place."—*Stonehenge* is an Anglo-Saxon term, signifying "hanging stones."

† The variety of opinions respecting such monuments is amusingly illustrated by the various derivations which have been suggested for the name of this chamber. Stow, after Camden, derives it from *Cati*-gern, the brother of Vortimer, who fell near the spot in the great battle with Hengist and Horsa, A. D. 455. This date, however, is too ancient for a writer in the *Illustrated London News* (23rd Feb. 1861), who prefers the claim of some "old *Kit*, or Keith, who used it as a sheltering-place when he was keeping his flocks upon the plain; while Archdeacon Williams surmises, on the

well calculated to become a place of security, in time of danger, for the valuables, and even the persons of the priests.

3. The *Cromlech* (plural *Cromlechau*, from *Crom* "gibbous": hence the "Gow Crom" in Sir Walter Scott's novel). This also consisted of a huge flat stone, resting on three or more uneven supporters; but these so short as to leave no sufficient room for a chamber. The largest in Great Britain are found in the woods behind Plas Newydd, near the Menai Strait, the upper stone of one being 12½ feet long, 12 broad, and 4 thick. But a still finer specimen was discovered by Captain Meadows Taylor, of the Nizam's service, at Rajan-Kolur in Sorapûr.*

The Cromlech, according to prevalent opinion, was the altar of sacrifice. French antiquaries call them *dolmen* or stone tables.

4. The *Cistvaen*, or "Stone-Tomb," which is in fact a Cromlech *closed*, but with usually a small circular aperture. The cistvaens are usually found standing in the centre of a cairn or barrow, and containing bones, urns, &c. These were probably originally covered by a mound, but the superincumbent earth has been removed. It is observable that Captain Meadows Taylor did not find any funeral remains in any of the cromlechs opened by him, while such remains abounded in the cistvaens. This tallies with the results obtained in Europe, and justifies a distinction which modern antiquarians, as Wright and Lukis, have ignored.

5. The *Maen-hir*, or *Hir-vaen*, "Long Stone"—either a huge monolith, or a vast formless mass, commemorative probably of some great event, or of some departed hero.

6. The *Kilchin*† or "Stone Circle."

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other hand, that in this remarkable monument we have the famed *Maen Cetti*, "Stone Treasury," one of the three lasting works attributed (in the 88th Triad) to Prudain, who gave his name (corrupted by the Romans into Britannia) to the island. *Coi-ti*, he says, is pure Cymric, and signifies a "hollow house." Thus has the *Cetti-Coiti*, the "Hollow Treasury-house" of the ancient Britons, degenerated in our rude Saxon lips to the vulgar "Kit's Cotty House," and the royal Prudain been confounded with "old Kit!"

"Vera rerum vocabula amisimus."

The four stones of which this stupendous monument is formed are of the sort called "Kentish rag." That on the south side is 8 feet high by 7½ broad, that on the north, 8 feet high by 8 broad. The end upright stone is very irregular; its medium is about 5 feet in height as in breadth. The transverse or impost is an irregular hexagon about 11 feet long and 8 broad; it is nearly 2 feet thick, and weighs 11 tons.

The *Illustrated London News* confounds the megalithic chamber with the cromlech, and both with the cistvaen.

* *See Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 14, Art. 2, 1851; and No. 17, Art. 4, 1853.

† Kilch, Kirch, Circus, Kirk, *Church*, as some would derive, though κυριακος affords a much more likely etymon. Such, perhaps, was the *Gilgal*, "circle of stones," to which Samuel called the people, and between which and his *cromlech* at Ramah he seems to have passed his time. *Gael Clachan*, a "circle of stones," is the name still given in the Highlands of Scotland to the place where a Church stands: it is equivalent to Kirktown. Hence it is said, "Will ye go to the stones?" or, "Have you been at the stones?"—that is, will you go to, or have you been at Church?

This is the most famous monument of the Druids. Many, perhaps the majority, of these circles were designed to support or enclose sepulchral mounds. Others, and those the largest, seem to have been used both as religious temples, and as courts of law.

The "Grand National Cathedral" at Stonehenge or Avebury is believed to be described by Hecatæus of Miletus,* as quoted by Diodorus Siculus, two thousand years ago. "There is," says he, "in the island of the Hyperboreans, both a consecrated precinct [τέμενος] of great magnificence, and a temple of corresponding beauty, adorned with numerous gifts, and in shape spherical. There is also a city sacred to the god [the Sun-God, as the representative of The Invisible], and the majority of its inhabitants are harpers [the Bards], and these, continually harping in the temple, sing lyrically hymns to the god."—Such, says Mr. Maurice,† is the "account given, nearly two thousand years ago, of this circular temple, for it could mean no other, by Diodorus the Sicilian, from a writer prior in time."

The writer of an article on "Stonehenge" in the *Quarterly Review* (July 1860) has ventured on the following extraordinary statement :—"The whole argument," says he, "of the supporters of the theory [*i. e.*, of the Druidical origin of the temple] is nothing more than this : there was an order of priests called Druids in Britain when Cæsar invaded the country, and when Tacitus and Strabo wrote ; and there is a class of monuments in this country regarding whose origin we know nothing : therefore we assume these monuments were built by the Druids." This were a *non sequitur* certainly. But the case is not fairly stated. Although the Druids themselves consigned none of their religious tenets to writing, we are not without some knowledge of the origin and use of these monuments. We have "historical evidence to show that the religion of the ancient population of Gaul was intimately connected with these structures, and that their religion was Druidical, brought from Britain into Gaul." And "as it can be proved that the inhabitants of Great Britain were similar in their religious institutions to those of Central Gaul, it follows that what was true in Arvernia is true also in Britannia, and that all the megalithic structures with which Great Britain is studded from the Land's-End to the Oreades, were the works of a people who had Druids for their priests."‡

* This Hecatæus is to be carefully distinguished from his namesake of Abdera.

† Maurice's *Indian Antiquities*. Dr. Stukeley and Archdeacon Williams argue learnedly in favour of the same hypothesis ; but the former gives the preference in favour of *Avebury*, in the immediate vicinity of Stonehenge, and a still more remarkable monument, though much less known and more affected by the ravages of time. In the same neighbourhood is *Silbury Hill*, the largest barrow or tumulus known in Europe, upwards of 2,000 feet in circumference, supposed by Dr. Stukeley to be the sepulchral monument of the British King who founded the temple at Avebury, and pronounced by him to be "the most magnificent mausoleum in the world."—(See *Penny Cyclopædia*, Article "*Avebury.*")

‡ Williams : *Megalithic Structures in Auvergne.*

The *Quarterly Review* does well in his attempt to "turn the lamp of *Indian* [archæology] on these hitherto mysterious monuments." This "lamp" will, we are inclined to believe, reveal the interesting fact, that the circle of stones at Amravati on the Kistna, and the cognate structures on Salisbury Plain, were the works of a homogeneous people. In other words, it will make probable that the ancient Celtic or Cymbrian tribes, whose faith was Druidical, entered at a very early period into India.* It may, *perhaps*, enable us to trace a reference to their name in the *Dravida Désha*, or the Madras country."† But it must be a magic lamp indeed which will blend Celtic with Scandinavian mythology, or confound *Woden*, the strong warrior of the Teutons, with the "peaceful contemplatist" *Buddha*.‡

The outer circle at Stonehenge is composed of forty stones, each standing 13 feet above the soil, and joined by a single architrave nearly 3 feet in height. Within these stand the five great trilithons, rising in height,

* An able paper by Captain Congreve, in the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* (Nos. 32 and 33, 1847), first revealed to the Christian world the existence of Druidical remains on the Neilgherries. The perusal of this paper stimulated the inquiring mind of Captain Meadows Taylor to researches which issued in the discovery of many similar remains in the Sorapûr State, and elsewhere in the Deccan, which had not before been noticed or known to exist. (See Art. 2 in No. 14., and Art. 4 in No. [illegible] of the *Journal of the Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society*.) It seems, too, that cromlechs, cistvaens, and cairns, identical, or nearly so, with those in Europe, have been detected in Orissa, in North Arcot, at Gehrârch near Bagdad, and on the hills near Waghodur in Scinde.

We remark, too, that whereas *images* have (according to Captain Congreve) been found in some of the cairns on the Neilgherries, "the absence of images in cistvaens and cromlechs justifies [Captain Taylor's] assumption for these of a higher antiquity and purer Druidical faith than the cairns in which images are found."

† The etymological meaning of *Dravida* is not known. It is given as the name of a people in the South of India in Manu's Institutes.

‡ A reverend friend, whose stores of information *de omni scibili* are as freely opened as they are vast and various, has, at my request, favoured me with the following heads of objections to the *Quarterly Reviewer's* crude theories of the Buddhist origin of Stonehenge, and the connection of Buddha with Odin :—

"1. No proof has yet been had of any historical connection of the Celts with Indian Buddhism.

"2. None of the technical terms of the Buddhists are found in any of the Celtic languages.

"3. The bloody worship of the Celts is opposed to Buddhism, which discards bloody sacrifices of every form.

"4. The Druids, the religious leaders of the Celts, were *priests*. Buddhism recognises 'saints,' 'devotees,' and 'ministers,' but has no 'priests,' properly so called.

"5. The Buddhist temples, both excavated and structural, have no resemblance to Stonehenge. The remains in India, which in their *trilithons*, circles, &c., resemble Stonehenge, are Celtic and not Buddhist.

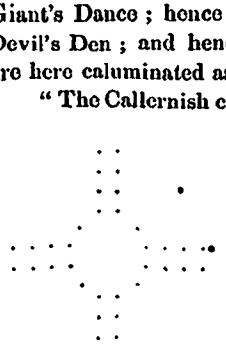
"6. *Woden*, said [by the *Quarterly Review*] to be equivalent to *Buddha*, was a Scandinavian and not a Celtic divinity. His concept was that of a strong warrior (*Woden*—the mad or Furious One), while that of Buddha was of a peaceful contemplatist."

from the pair nearest the entrance, which stand nearly 20 feet above the soil, to the great central group, which reaches 25 feet in height. These blocks have been rudely chiselled and squared into the required shape; but the exposure to the weather for untold centuries has so eaten away the softer parts, and the lichens have so rounded off the sharper edges, that there is perhaps no monument in contemplating which we are more inclined to forget man's agency, and, in the chaos of ruin in which it now exists, to fancy we are looking at some freak of nature, which had fastened these gigantic masses, and heaped them together in such unfamiliar forms and in such strange confusion.*

A gallant friend, who does not wish to be named, has favoured us with a very interesting notice (from his own observation) of a Druidical Circle at Callernish, in the Island of Lewis, one of the Hebrides, said to be second only to Stonehenge.

"What is remarkable," he says, "is that a tradition still exists there as to the Druids among the Gaelic peasantry, by whom the circle is called, in Gaelic, '*The place of the wicked lying old men.*'"

As this is by no means the character which we are disposed to assign to the Druids, we would here remark, that long after the people who raised these monuments had passed away—when their meaning and object were alike forgotten,—they not unnaturally became objects of superstitious fear to the vulgar. In France they were popularly associated with Gargantua, in Wales with Merlin, in England with Weland Smith and Robin Hood. They are still connected in the imagination of the peasantry of both countries with fairies and devils. Hence the popular names often found attached to them; hence Stonehenge was nicknamed *Choir-Gaur;* or the Giant's Dance; hence a cromlech on Marlborough Downs is called the Devil's Den; and hence our venerable Truth-loving friends the Druids are here calumniated as—"*wicked lying old men*"!



"The Callernish circle," proceeds our kind informant, "is approached by four double rows of upright stones, somewhat in this style. The country-people say there was formerly a flat stone in the centre with a hollow and a groove from it, but it had been broken up and carried off, as were many of the other stones, for building purposes.

"Sir James Matheson, the proprietor of that district, had heard that the inner part of the circle was pared and dug down through the peat, which had grown up, and a rude pavement found.

"The circle is on a flat piece of ground, overlooking the Atlantic, and is little known, although a very remarkable relic of days gone by."

* *Quarterly Review.* The reviewer, in accordance with his own anti-Druidic theory, writes "*fourteen* centuries."

Thus, then, as our great poet sings,—

> "A few rude monuments of mountain-stone
> Survive; all else is swept away."*

But we are glad to find the *Quarterly* confessing, that "there is a grandeur even in the situation of Stonehenge which adds immensely to its interest, standing as it does in the centre of a vast open plain," while its huge "monolithic masses impart to it an impressiveness which no other building in Europe possesses to the same extent." Warton justly apostrophises it—

> "Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle!"

III. It is high time now to speak of the *Religious Principles* of Druidism, as taught by that order which may be designated as the DRUIDS *Proper*. These were chosen from the tallest and most learned of the inferior orders, and they again, elected a President, or Arch-Druid, out of their own body, who held the office for life.

The great verities of primæval religion, the knowledge of the one True God, and the relations existing between Him and His rational creatures, were transmitted orally by the descendants of Noah to other tribes than those of Israel. We may smile at the *perfervidum ingenium* of Welsh archæologists when they claim for the ancient Britons a participation in all the knowledge which was the traditional inheritance of the patriarchal ages in the least corrupted periods. It is not without interest, however, that Taliesin, the famous Welsh bard, expressly ascribes the substance of his songs to traditions received from the sacred Ogdoad, or Arkite heroes; and that the name *(Hu)* of the Supreme God, of whom the sun was unhappily employed as the symbol, and subsequently, it is to be feared, worshipped as the substitute, has been identified, by Jacob Bryant and others, with *Noah* himself, as the great deified hero of the ancient world. —But we must not venture upon *Bryantology*.

Allowing, as we may be permitted to do, Roman prejudice and British enthusiasm mutually to correct one another, we may allege as the four great central doctrines of the Druidic system—

First—The existence of ONE SUPREME DEITY, whom they worshipped under the name of *Hu* (pronounced *Hee*), associated probably with the Hebrew *Yah*, and which we find Latinized into *Hesus*. But while the awful groves of the primitive Druids resounded with the praises of the One Almighty God, this pure monotheistic system had, it would seem, been corrupted before the age of Cæsar by various causes. Dr. L. Alexander, however, believes that the classical writers were mistaken in attributing to the Druids at any time a multiplicity of gods, and that this mistake arose from the "various designations used for God, according to the different relations they regarded Him as sustaining, or the different agencies through

* Wordsworth's "*Excursion*," B. 9.

which they believed Him to operate." The corruptions of the faith, if truly alleged, may be attributed mainly to the gradual deification of the Arkite heroes, and the intermingling of Sabaism, or the worship of the sun.

The later Druids are also accused of offering human sacrifices, to Taranis, Teutates,—

> " Or to Andates, female Power! who gave
> (For so they fancied) glorious victory."*

Authors ancient and modern have vented their pious horror against

> " Druid priests, sprinkled with human gore,"†
> " Roastynge their vyctymes rounde about the flame,"‡
> " That Hesus, direly pleased, in joyous mood
> Might flesh their swords and glut their scythes with blood."§

Such abominations, we are assured by Pliny, formed part of the ceremonies used in collecting the *sclago* (savin), the mistletoe of the oak *(prenawyr)*, and the *ovum anguinum* or serpent's egg.‖ The poet Lucan gives an appalling description of the Massylian *(Marseilles)* grove, whose black shades neither bird nor beast frequented, nor breath of air penetrated the unearthly gloom; where the yews which were lying down rose again spontaneously; where the oaks were hung with enormous dragons; and where the sacred groves blazed continually without being consumed, and illuminated the innumerable altars, whereon were immolated so vast a multitude of human victims that the trees grew crimson! Equal marvels

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* Wordsworth's "*Excursion*," B. 9.

† Warton: *Sonnet on Stonehenge.*

‡ Chatterton: *Battle of Hastings.*

§ Richards: *Aboriginal Britons.*

‖ The formation of this famous Druidical amulet is circumstantially described by Pliny, and thus poetically rendered by Mason:—

> "The potent adder-stone,
> Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon,
> When, in undulating twine,
> The foaming snakes prolific join:
> When they hiss, and when they bear
> Their wondrous egg aloof in air—
> Thence, before to earth it fall,
> The Druid, in his hallow'd pall,
> Receives the prize,
> And instant flies,
> Follow'd by the invenom'd brood,
> Till he cross the chrystal flood."
>
> *Caractacus.*

The poet says, in a note to this chorus, that the remains of the *Glain Neidr* or snake-stone superstition linger still in Cornwall and Scotland. In reality, the adder-stone was merely a sort of beads of different coloured glass, and was used as a magical charm or amulet. The smoke of the sclago *(Juniperus Sabina)* was considered a specific for the cure of diseased eyes. The mistletoe, as observed before, was termed an *All-heal.*

are related by Adam of Bremen and Locenus of the groves of Upsala, where the oaks, once saturated with human gore, were thenceforth supposed to be imbued with an emanation of Divinity!

These absurd and credulous accounts have been transmitted to us only through the channel of their enemies, the Romans, who knew that while the native priests exercised any influence in Britain, their own power must rest on an insecure basis, and to whom the Druid Institute was known only in its later and degenerate days. Cæsar himself—the elegant, humane, and indignant reviler of the Celtic mysteries—was not guiltless of the like abominations. Human immolations have, indeed, been practised wherever the spirit of polytheism has prevailed; and although we dare not say, with Mason, of the altar of Mona—

> "Ages on ages
> Have there done sacrifice, but *never yet*
> *Stream'd it with human gore*,"

yet we may safely affirm, that *if ever* the Druids stained their altars with human blood, it was when they too had lost sight of the Divine Unity. It was, in the language of the poet Wordsworth—

> "A baleful rite,
> Which in the lapse of ages had crept o'er
> Diluvian truths and patriarchal lore."*

Secondly—The Druids taught the ORIGIN OF THE WORLD through the gradual progress of order, under the plastic power of GOD, among the wild chaotic principles of primitive nature, and its future renovation by fire.

Thirdly—The METEMPSYCHOSIS, or transmission of the soul from one *human* body to another, and its progress from *Abred*, or the state of evil, to *Gwynvyd*, or the state of perfect knowledge and felicity.† The most probable explanation of a myth which disturbed the mind of Herodotus‡ is, that Abaris, a northern Druid, initiated Pythagoras of Samos in this doctrine, which became a main tenet in the Pythagorean school, corrupted

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* *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*: No. III. The Trepidation of the Druids.

† Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, thus refers to the Druidical doctrine:—

> "If, as those Druids taught, which kept the British rites,
> And dwell in darksome groves, there counselling with sprites,
> When these our souls by death our bodies do forsake,
> They instantly again do other bodies take,
> I would have wished your spirits *(a)* redoubled in my breast,
> To give my verse applause to Time's eternal rest."—*Song* i.
>
> *(a) Sc.* the spirits of the old Bards.

And again,—

> The fearless British priests, under an aged oak,
> * * * * *
> Preached to the beardless youth the soul's immortal state—
> To other bodies still how it should transmigrate;
> Which to contempt of death them strongly might excite."—*Song* ix.

‡ *Melpomene*, 36.

by the admission of a migration into *brute* bodies, more properly styled *Metensomatosis.*

Fourthly—The IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.—This is particularly noticed by Cæsar, Strabo, Valerius Maximus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Lucan. "Vobis," says the Poet of Pharsalia, apostrophising the priests of ancient Gaul—

"Vobis autoribus umbræ
Non tacitas Erebi sedes, Ditisque profundi
Pallida regna petunt; regit idem spiritus artus
Orbe alio; longæ (canitis si cognita) vitæ
Mors media est";—

but—alas for the hopeless melancholy of heathenism! the Roman poet adds, with an envious despair—

"Felices errore suo!"—*(Happy in their delusion!)**

Of these distinctive religious principles, some were preached openly to the people, while others were *esoteric*, communicated only to the initiated, in caverns or in the depths of forests, and (as we have said) never committed to writing. The immortality of the soul was one of their *exoteric* doctrines, *i. e.* it was taught openly to the people, in order to make them brave and fearless in battle:†—

"Inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis; et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ."—LUCAN.

Thus rendered by Rowe,—

"Hence they no care for this frail being feel,
But rush undaunted on the pointed steel;
Provoke approaching fate, and bravely scorn
To spare that life which must so soon return."

"So confident was their belief in a future state, that it is recorded of them that they gave loans of money to each other, to be repaid when they should reach *Flath-innis*, the Island of the Brave. The historian who records this adds: 'I should call them fools, were it not that the stoled Pythagoras believed the same as these men in trews.'"‡—(Alexander's *Iona.*)

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* "Id verum non Roma potens, non Græcia docta
Scivit; sed, longè divisis partibus orbis,
Id verum, O Solymarum arces, loca læta superno
Lumine, templa Dei, summoque edocta Jehovâ,
Id vos,—et Druidæ cecinerunt carmine sacro."
(Ex Poemate mssto, cui "Druidæ" titulus est.)

† "Maximè mirum est," says Camerarius, speaking of the Germans, "priscos Germanos retinuisse firmiter *spem resurrectionis*," which (we translate the bald Latinity) was accounted ridiculous by their enemies the Romans, but which, according to Josephus, Hegesippus, Appian, and others, made the Germans (and the same is equally true of the Celts) "bold in fight and reckless of death."—*Operæ Subsecivæ, Cent.* iii. *Cap.* 65.

‡ See "*Iona*, by the Rev. W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D."

Diogenes Laertius sums up the public discourses of the Druids in language which strikingly reminds us of Holy Writ,—"To worship GOD, to do no evil, and to exercise self-denial."*

Here, then, we pause in our researches. We will not venture to affirm, with some, that the doctrine of the Trinity, and even the scheme of Redemption, were among the esoteric mysteries of the Druids—although the mystic symbol of the *winged serpent in a circle*, preserved in the configuration of their temples,† as well as the peculiar sacredness attributed to the *trefoil*, the form of whose leaves may shadow forth the mysterious Three-in-one, have been thought to attest some traditional knowledge of the former; and the Christian Bard Taliesin, alluding to his predecessors of ancient days, does say,—"Have they not sung of *Christ that was crucified*, and of the future day of doom, and of one that has been endowed with the lore of the deluge?"‡

We do not pretend to investigate the several steps by which the pure religion of the Noachidæ was debased among the most intellectual of their descendants, either into the brutal materialism of the Epicurean School, or the homicidal sacrifices of Tyre, Carthage, Gaul, and Britain. We have preferred to contemplate the Druidic Theology in its palmy state, as the depositary of Primitive Truth in the West throughout the dark period between the Patriarchal and Polytheistic ages. The ancient Creed of Britain (before it, like every other secret system, was corrupted) contained truths which—it is surely no improbable hypothesis to maintain—prepared its votaries for the reception of a purer faith. We need not wonder, therefore, that the Christianised Druid, recognising some of the symbolical expressions in Scripture which represent the Deity as the "ROCK of Ages," and our Saviour as the "STONE hewn out of the mountain," as in close connection with his own system, should have appropriated as a motto the ancient proverb—

"Da 'r maen gyda 'r Efengyl"—("Good is the Stone with the Gospel") §

—or, as we may paraphrase it, CHRISTIANITY IS THE PERFECTION OF DRUIDHEACHT.‖

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* Compare Micah vi. 8: "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?"

† The interpretation is as old as Sanchoniathon. The *circle* denotes the illimitable Deity: the *serpent*, the animating Word (*Numb.* xxi. 9); the *wings* refer to the Spirit vivifying the world by His motion. (*Gen.* i. 2.)

‡ The last clause is supposed to refer to no less a personage than Enoch, who is claimed as identical with the British Teutates—the Egyptian Thoth. See "*Stonehenge, a Romance of the Days of Nero*," with an "*Essay on Druidism*" appended. (*Bentley*, 1842.)

§ Archdeacon Williams.

‖ "Erant illi [*sc.* Druidæ] non modò Philosophiæ, sed et Religionis cultui deditissimi; quantumvis dubium not sit, quin nobis, qui Christianæ imbibimus doctrinæ puritatem, irreligiosa videatur ipsa eorum Religio."—PICARDUS, *Prisca Celopædia*, L. ii. p. 63. *Parisiis*, 1556.

The Druids, harassed at all points on the mainland by their relentless enemies, the Romans, retreated to Mona (Anglesea) and Iona—

"Druid Icolmkill" (D. M. Moir),—

where for a season they found shelter. In Iona, indeed, they "retained their predominance until the years of our Lord 563 or 564, when they were supplanted by the arrival of St. Columba; from whom this island, of which the earliest known name was *Innis-nan Druidneach* ("Isle of the Druids"), was thenceforward called *Hyona* or *Ihona* ("Holy Island"), or *I-columb-kill*—

"Isle of Columba's cell."—Wordsworth.

The followers of Columba, styled Culdees (*sc.*, *Cultores Dei*, or the Celtic equivalent, *Ceile De*, servants of God), adopted many of the usages of their Druidic predecessors whose superstitions they had overturned.—(Jamieson and Alexander.)

The vestiges of ancient Druidism still to be traced in social customs open a wide and deeply interesting field, in which we should delight to expatiate. We limit ourselves, on the present occasion, to two very curious facts. The first is mentioned by Dr. Jamieson, in his learned history of the Culdees. An old man in the parish of Moulin, he says, "not long ago," (he wrote A.D. 1811), "although very regular in his devotions, never addressed the Supreme Being by any other title than that of *Coifi-Dry* or Arch-Druid."

After this, we may feel the less surprise at learning that there was one person living so late as A.D. 1840, who professed to be a veritable Druid, and to have received the secret of the order from his father. This was Mr. Taliesin Williams, of Merthyr Tydfil, son of Iolo Morganwg, "and he" (wrote one in that year) "is the only one of the order now surviving." This Druid of the nineteenth century appears to have been as mysterious and incommunicative as his forefathers of 2,000 years ago, and determined that the secret should die with him. "I assure you," says our informant, "I have not been able to form the most distant idea of ancient Druidism from anything that he may have said."*

Perhaps the hearers and readers of this lecture may be tempted to say the same.

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* See a "*Letter from Carnhuanac* [*alias* Mr. Rice] *to a Lady*," quoted by the learned Archdeacon of Cardigan.

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